

# WOMEN BATTLE FOR POWER AT VIENNA'S COURT

Empress Zita's Influence Over Her Husband Will Be Challenged Early in His Reign by the Hapsburg Archduchesses, Led by the Empress's Mother-in-Law, Who Opposed Her Son's Marriage



ANNUNCIATA, AUNT (UNMARRIED) OF THE NEW EMPEROR, ACTED AS FIRST LADY IN THE LAND UNTIL THE PRESENT EMPEROR'S MARRIAGE

By F. CUNIFFE-OWEN.

**B** LONELY, blue-eyed Empress Zita of Austria, with all that charm of manner inherited from her great-grandmother, the fascinating Duchess de Berry, and despite her youth—she is barely twenty-four years of age—has nevertheless given already evidence of possessing a masterful character. This is the impression which she has made upon those who have been brought into contact with her since her marriage, and she bids fair to play a dominant role in the new reign at Vienna.

Wedded to the eldest son of the most noble, and in matters where the fair sex was concerned, the most unscrupulous of all the Don Juans who have figured in the annals of the House of Hapsburg, she has known how not only to win, but also to retain, the entire devotion of her husband. This is all the more to her credit, since at the time of her marriage she possessed but little experience of the world, and still less of those feminine artifices which women more sophisticated are apt to employ to secure and to anchor the affections of their admirers.

She had received most of her education in a Benedictine convent in the Isle of Wight, and it was in that most delightful and picturesque of the British Isles that she was wooed and won by Emperor Charles. She went almost straight from the school room to the altar, and her debut at the court of Vienna synchronized with her marriage.

All sorts of manoeuvres were organized to prevent the union. Many of the members of the imperial family, especially the Archduchesses, were opposed to the match, and an endeavor was even made to stir up popular prejudice against the idea of bringing another Bourbon princess into the sovereign house of Hapsburg. Intrigues were organized to wean young Archduke Charles from his infatuation.

But all without success. Zita never allowed her fiancé's love for her to waver, despite all the temptations placed in his path. The marriage took place. It proved extremely popular, and to-day the new Emperor is entirely and admittedly submissive to her influence.

Thus far she has used that influence to stiffen his backbone and to infuse a degree of manliness and forcefulness into his nature which it did not formerly possess. As a young officer he was disposed to indolence rather than to energy, inclined to avoid trouble instead of boldly confronting it, and given up to pleasure rather than to the stern requirements of life. To-day he displays a degree of virility and strength which no one ever suspected to be concealed beneath his easygoing ways. Much of this unexpected development has been brought about by the terrible experiences which he has undergone since the beginning of the war. But most of it is undoubtedly due to the influence of his Empress.

That this influence of Zita over her husband will remain uncontested throughout his reign it is idle to believe. To begin with, sovereigns are subjected by reason of their rank to temptations which do not fall to the share of men of a less exalted station in life.

The efforts of the fair to attract the admiration and the good will of a monarch, especially when he is young and good looking, are extraordinary. Like the peacock, with his feathers, they put forth all their charms to captivate his eye, no matter how lofty their principles or irreproachable their conduct. Their heightened color, their manifest pleasure at the distinction conferred by his address, and above all their evident desire to please him with their beauty and their wit, constitute a homage with which any man, be he peasant or prince, must be gratified.

No court in Europe has been able in times past to boast of more lovely and captivating women than that of Vienna. It may safely be assumed that after the war it will resume its preeminence in this respect, and that many attempts will be made by the ladies of the court to win the favor of Emperor Charles, in order to turn it to social or political account, in a foregone conclusion.

Nor is it only these ladies of the court who will seek to contest with Zita her influence over her husband. There will be also the ladies of the Hapsburg family, which comprises something like three scores of archduchesses, most of them engaged in some sort of rivalry with the others. It may be interesting to draw the attention to the most important of them, to those who have sought to play a leading role in the immediate past and who may be expected to endeavor to do so in the future.



AN EARLIER PICTURE OF ARCHDUCHESS ELIZABETH, PRINCESS OF WINDISCHGRATZ, WHO WOULD BE QUEEN OF HUNGARY, WERE IT NOT FOR THE PRAGMATIC SANCTION

only, extremely dull. Moreover, in the perpetual dissensions that marred the entire married life of Maria Josepha the latter's handsome and dashing husband usually found sympathy and indulgence from his stepmother, Marie Therese, to whom he was devoted. When his health gave way and he was overtaken by that frightful malady which forced him into seclusion and to which he eventually succumbed it was his stepmother who soothed and nursed him throughout his sufferings and who watched by his deathbed, from which his wife remained aloof, not even putting in an appearance at his funeral. True, he is young, but he is her by his faithlessness, by his neglect and by his mad freaks. But it was felt that the tortures which he endured before being released by death should have moved the mother of his children to pity and to forgiveness.

During the lifetime of Empress Elizabeth, whose distaste for state pageants and court functions was so pronounced, she would frequently delegate Marie Therese, who was her sister-in-law, to take her place as first lady in the land rather than the Belgian-born Crown Princess Stephanie, whom she could not tolerate. In the tragedy of Mayerling, the late Emperor's brother, Charles Louis became next heir. It was Marie Therese who invested with the authority of acting Empress, and it must be confessed that her powers as such were not always used in kindness to her stepdaughter-in-law, Maria Josepha.

Then came the day when Marie Therese lost her husband, and, with ex-Crown Princess Stephanie likewise eliminated by her widowhood, it was Maria Josepha who became acting first lady of the land and availed herself of the position to get even in all sorts of feminine ways with Marie Therese. When Maria Josepha is turned as relegated to the background as a widow by her husband Archduke Otto's death it was his half sister, Annunziata, that is to say, Archduchess Marie Therese's own daughter, who stepped into the place of acting Empress, which she held until the marriage of Prince Zita of Bourbon to the then her presumptive, now Emperor Charles I.

Archduchess Annunziata had thus plenty of opportunity to avenge the slights put upon her mother. She was at one time betrothed to Duke Siegfried of Bavaria, but felt herself compelled to break off the match on the eve of the wedding day owing to circumstances in his past life which had been brought to her knowledge. He lost his reason in consequence thereof and had to be placed under restraint, and she, who had remained deeply in love with him, was so heartbroken over the affair that she wanted to become a nun.

Her uncle, the late Emperor, would not allow this, and he compromised matters by appointing her abbess of the secular Convent of Noble Ladies of Hradshchin at Prague, a dignity which enabled her to retain her place at court and in the world and which carries with it the curious episcopal prerogative of crowning the Queen of Bohemia when the Cardinal Primate of Prague crowns the King with the crown of St. Wenceslaus.

Another cause of bad blood between Maria Josepha and the Archduchesses Marie Therese and Annunziata was the kindness and support which both of the latter accorded to the Duchess of Hohenberg, who was murdered with her husband, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, at Sarajevo in the summer of 1914, on the eve of the present war. Maria Josepha hated her brother-in-law, Francis Ferdinand, who was the son of her two sons, and may be said to have been one of the leaders of the powerful ring of other Archduchesses who contested with so much bitterness the pretensions of his morganatic wife to be received at court and to rank as a member of the imperial family.

It is difficult to convey any idea of the resentment entertained by the Hapsburg Princesses against the Duchess of Hohenberg, which found its expression in all sorts of painful incidents at court and in the great world of Vienna. In fact, the late Emperor was forced, it was said, by his nephew and her apparent, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, to promote



ARCHDUCHESS BLANCHE AND HER SONS, SHE IS A BOURBON, BEING A DAUGHTER OF THE LATE DON CARLOS.



ARCHDUCHESS ALICE, WIDOW OF THE GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY, THE THIRD OF THE BOURBON BORN ARCHDUCHESSES OF AUSTRIA.

Archduchess Isabella, wife of Archduke Frederick, Generalissimo of the army of the Dual Empire since the beginning of the war, Isabella is not of royal or imperial birth. She belongs to the mediocrity of the noble Belgian house of Croix, whose members have the right of making on a footing of equality with scions of the sovereign dynasties of Europe. It is a prerogative which the reigning families do not altogether relish, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that Princess Isabella of Croix secured from the Court of Vienna at the time of her wedding a very reluctant and rather ungracious recognition of her claim to share the archducal title and imperial status of her husband. Her path in Austria was not strewn with roses. She found it almost impossible to secure ladies in

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Then there is Archduchess Isabella, the wife of Archduke Frederick, Generalissimo of the army of the Dual Empire since the beginning of the war. Isabella is not of royal or imperial birth. She belongs to the mediocrity of the noble Belgian house of Croix, whose members have the right of making on a footing of equality with scions of the sovereign dynasties of Europe. It is a prerogative which the reigning families do not altogether relish, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that Princess Isabella of Croix secured from the Court of Vienna at the time of her wedding a very reluctant and rather ungracious recognition of her claim to share the archducal title and imperial status of her husband. Her path in Austria was not strewn with roses. She found it almost impossible to secure ladies in

waiting from among the women of the old aristocracy, who contended that they were her equals, and even her superiors, in birth and in the lustre of lineage. Being a forceful, masterful woman, she eventually made her way at Vienna, aided by the fact that her husband was of all the Hapsburg archdukes the most colorfully rich. It was only natural under the circumstances that when the late Archduke Francis Ferdinand, instead of marrying her eldest daughter, Christine, as she had hoped and expected, contracted in lieu thereof a morganatic union with the penniless Countess Sophie Chotek, whose services she had engaged as the companion and attendant of her girls, she should set to work to render things as unpleasant as possible for her former dependent, who was murdered as

Archduchess Marie Therese, born a Braganza, the widowed stepmother of the new emperor and the author of his marriage. Archduchess Augusta, wife of Archduke Joseph, makes her home in Hungary. Archduchess Marie Valerie, favorite and younger daughter of the late emperor, who made his home with her for the greater part of the years after the murder of Empress Elizabeth, that is to say, during some eighteen years. When she and her children were not residing with him at the palace of Schoenbrunn or at Ischl he was staying with them at her castle of Waldsee. Her influence over him was unbounded and, while she carefully refrained from using it for any political purposes, she turned it to account in matters relating to the court and to the various members of the reigning house. The privileged position which she thus occupied during near two decades has come to an end with the death of her father. She cannot but suffer from the changed conditions and her disposition toward the new Emperor is scarcely calculated to be improved thereby.

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